



On 27th November the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) in conjunction with the Alliance screened the film Resilience at the Citadel Youth Centre in Leith, Edinburgh. The film was followed by a panel discussion with a broad theme focus on ACEs and safer communities and justice.

The Film

RESILIENCE is a one-hour documentary that investigates the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the implications of Toxic Stress. Toxic stress is a cause of many adverse health outcomes from heart disease and cancer to substance abuse and depression. There is also a strong link between ACEs and involvement in the justice system. Extremely stressful experiences in childhood can alter brain development and have lifelong effects on health and behaviour. This therefore justifies why ACEs are an important public health and community safety issue.

The messages within the film underpin the importance of policies to support children and families and have implications for practice e.g. trauma/adversity informed practice. The Scottish Government has an aspiration for Scotland to be the best place to grow up but to achieve that Scotland has to be the best place to parent. ACEs are relevant across the life course and across society. Referring to ACEs provides a common language for policymakers and public services.

The film has been seen by thousands of people from all over Scotland and across many different sectors and SCSN welcomed this opportunity provide a platform for community safety practitioners to watch the film and reflect on the links with their own areas of work.

The Venue

The Citadel Youth Centre proved to be an excellent choice of venue. It has provided community-based youth work in Leith since 1980. It is an experienced voluntary organisation with strong links to local people and local partners. Evident through discussions with staff, the information on the projects and programmes delivered and inspirational artwork all around the centre is the notion that this is trauma aware environment. One in which young people with and experiencing ACE's (and their families) visit regularly for help and support.

For more information on the Citdel, - <https://citadelyouthcentre.org.uk/>

The Audience

It was a packed audience with 69 people coming along from a range of public and third sector organisations. Among others, Police Scotland, Local Government, NHS, Education, Women's Aid, Corra Foundation, Bridges Project and the Bethany Christian

Trust were represented. This mix of experience and viewpoints in the room proved conducive to an interesting and thought-provoking panel discussion.

Panel Members

Colette Mason is a Community Links Practitioner with the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) based in Possilpark Health and Care Centre, working to make links between people and their communities through their local GP practice. Part of Colette's role is in developing innovative ideas to support practice development, one of which is supporting the introduction of an ACEs pilot project within the practice.

Superintendent Paul Main has been the Local Police Commander for Ayrshire Division (covering East, North and South Ayrshire) since January 2017 having started his career in Ayrshire in 1989.

Having seen the Resilience Documentary in 2017 Paul announced the ambition to make the 850 officers and staff of Ayrshire Division 'Trauma Informed' in February 2018 with the Division achieving its first phase of being Trauma Informed in November 2018.

Dr Karen McDonnell is Head of RoSPA Scotland, and works to identify routes through which health and safety performance within the world of work may be improved. Her role extends to encouraging business to business learning through the RoSPA Awards Excellence Forum.

Andy Thomas is the Deputy Manager of the Citadel Youth Centre, where he also manages the Citadel Families Project. Andy has worked at the Citadel for 13 years, and previously held posts in Local Authorities. Andy is qualified in community education, and is also a social work practice teacher, with a particular interest in community based approaches to early intervention with disadvantaged children and families.

Amanda Coulthard has worked in West Dunbartonshire Council for 6 years, most recently as Performance & Strategy Manager. In this role Amanda has responsibility for the community planning partnership and supporting long term strategic planning for outcome improvement. Prior to joining the Council, Amanda worked in a range of roles across the public sector including in the NHS and in arms-length public bodies.

Panel Discussion

This section of this report provides a summary of the questions asked and answers given, a fuller account is available on request.

Firstly, panel members were asked to give their initial reflections on the film:

Shared reflections

- **Collaboration** – essential to prevent or address the impact of ACE's - services must work together and crucially with those individuals/families affected by ACE's
- **Sustainable and consistent** – support needs to be for however long someone needs it
- **Inclusive** – each panel members said the film made them think not only about the individuals and families they support, but also the people they work with - ACE's and trauma have impacted nearly all of us

Individual reflections

- **Andy's** immediate reaction was that film reflected that Health was catching up with what has been at the centre of youth work for a long time –the importance of **understanding behaviour rather than just reacting to it**
- After seeing the film the first time **Paul** said he wished he had seen it earlier in his career and he believes seeing it has made him a better Police Officer, Husband and Father. From a work perspective it made him realise that through doing their job (arresting people and raiding homes) **Police create trauma**. Having recognised this, he has introduced changes to working practices to mitigate the impact, for example, undertaking drug raids 9am, hopefully ensuring children are all at school

Question Time....

Ask for comments on around poverty not being included as an ACE's, highlighting her own experience working at Citadel, where they see many families experiencing poverty

Kirsten – Citadel Staff Member

Key discussion points:

- Important to note that the **10 ACE's come from original study** – in which they were found to be the most prevalent – **Colette** also highlighted that the original study wanted to look at issues which cut across all classes
- General agreement from all panel members of the importance of **acknowledging (in addition to the 10 ACE's) the impact of other 'things'** – for example poverty and bereavement.

- When discussing his experience at Citadel, **Andy** said that in order **support parents to parent the best they can, it is essential to help them with life's 'basics'** - it is difficult to think about much else if you are worried about having no money

What is being done to 'get the message out' - do take forward resilience planning..

Slido

Key discussion points:

- **Paul** talked about work underway in his police division (Ayrshire) where he has instigated film screenings and panel discussion for all Police Officers. He quoted **John Carnochan** (Police Officer & Co-founder of Violence Reduction Unit) who once told him – **Start where you are and do what you can**

Asked panel for their views on getting the message out to families, and how to make sure this is done in a supportive way

Ruth – Citadel Staff Member

Key discussion points:

- Everyone stressed the importance of open and honest discussion around ACE's using **positive language**- **Paul** talked about **not just counting ACE's** but **focusing on the positive protective factors**. **Andy** agreed counting ACE's is not enough - we all need to be **trauma informed**.
- Lots of discussion around **supporting professionals** to understand more about resilience and how **to support families** - but with caveat that **professionals need support too**
- **Karen** noted the **importance of learning from existing good practice** and Andy provided an example of Education introducing such roles as Family Support Worker

Noted that while it is important to be trauma informed and work with those who have ACE's - what about trying to prevent ACE's in the first instance?

Tricia, SCSN

Key discussion points:

- Discussion around how important it is **not to be fatalistic – experience of ACE's is not a life sentence** - there is opportunity throughout a lifetime for interventions - it isn't important where in the cycle you start
- **Paul** reiterated that this is about 'Getting it right' for every child, family and community and **stressed importance of recognising that as a rule public sector policy is not naturally trauma informed**
- All panel members highlighted the **importance of supporting staff**, in terms of not only in their role support others but also **with regard their own, personal experience of trauma**

What in practice does a trauma informed service look like?

Elinor, Building Safer Communities, Scottish Government

Key discussion points:

- **Paul** talked about the experience of **Ayrshire Police Division**, where his goal is to ensure **every police officer see the film** and importantly experience a **panel discussion** (including wherever possible someone with lived experience). This is the first phase for him, the second being to support his staff, ensuring their well being

What differences can be seen in frontline staff who are more 'trauma informed'?

Gill, Community Safety, Scottish Government

Key discussion points:

- **Paul** gave a couple of examples from his own team - one of which being when his Police Team contacted an Addiction Services Support Worker, to advise them that one of their clients was appearing in court and would probably welcome their support

Highlighted link between ACE's and community justice - noting that the impact of ACE's on adults can result in them often behaving in a 'childlike' manner, - do panel think criminal justice services have caught up with this way of thinking in terms of being 'trauma informed?'
David, SCSN

Key discussion points:

- **Amanda** said that in general she thinks the **criminal justice services have got some way to go** to increase their awareness of ACE's but noted there are some good examples – for example 'The Wise Group'. She reiterated the **importance of recognising that adults are the children who experienced ACE's**. She talked about the importance of **changing public attitudes and perceptions**
- **Andy** reiterated the importance of the **non-judgemental approach** taken at Citadel – working with people not condemning them

How can we create partnerships which create resilience, both within our partnerships and communities..

Slido

Key discussion points:

- **Amanda** highlighted that **partnerships need a certain maturity** to allow them to successfully work together, **developing actions based on evidence and need**.
- **Karen** noted the need to **build well connected, life sustaining relationships** and this was reiterated by other panel members with **Andy** saying that families need **reliable, long term, consistent support**
- Following on from the above panel members noted that **funding or strategic planning cycles do not always support long term support planning** – longest term often three years!
- **Paul** suggested a radical way forward could be to scrap the current wider governance and performance frameworks we have and **co-produce new ways of working**

Call for Action!

So, what can we as community safety partners do next...?

- If you haven't seen the film, get along to a screening or if you are in a position to do so, get a licence and screen it for your own CSP.. Following it up with a panel discussion.
- Speak to each other – find out what is going in your own local area to raise awareness of ACE's - what are local services doing to become more trauma informed? All our panel members highlighted the importance of collaboration, can you work with another partner and bring staff together to learn more..

- Reflect on your own service delivery - does anything you do create trauma.. What can you do to mitigate it?
- Think about your own team and colleagues – what support can you give them (or what can you do for yourself)..
- What could you do to create resilience in families so young people are less likely to experience ACEs?
- Start where you are and do what you can!

Appendix

Further information and reading...

This paper explores the research surrounding ACE's and Scotland's response to the concept- <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/resources/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-and-transformation/>

<http://www.adversechildhoodexperiences.co.uk/aces-forums> - NHS Health Scotland co-ordinates a multi-disciplinary Scottish Hub to develop work in Scotland and is working closely with the Scottish Government, particularly on a package of training. The Scottish Public Health Network's report on ACEs sets out some areas for action in Scotland. Alongside the Scottish Multi-disciplinary ACEs hub, several regional and national groups have been established.

The Scottish Government created a dedicated web page for ACEs and asked people to continue the national discussion, provide comments and feedback directly to them, or use other networks including social media. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/>

The Scottish Government has also published a summary of evidence on links between childhood adversity and criminality in adulthood <https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-childhood-adversity-resilience-crime/>.

See link to their conference <http://aceawareScotland.com/> which happened in Summer 2018 in Edinburgh.

Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice has undertaken some research on ACEs: https://www.cycj.org.uk/cycj_tags/ace/ And some blogs from their team too: <https://www.cycj.org.uk/an-ace-up-your-sleeve/> (and a follow up for NKBL by the same author <https://noknivesbetterlives.com/practitioners/discussion/we-need-to-talk-about-aces-but-other-things-too>) and <https://www.cycj.org.uk/3892-2/>